

Message Text

SECRET

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, LE, IS
SUBJECT: ISRAELI REACTION TO TERRORISM-A WARNING

1. DURING MEETING ON APRIL 10 WITH WEIZMAN, WE DISCUSSED THE EVENTS OF THE NIGHT OF APRIL 9-10 CONCERNING A REPORTED ATTACK BY TERRORISTS FROM THE SEA SOUTH OF TEL AVIV, WHICH TURNED OUT TO BE EITHER A HOAX OR A REPORT BY A DERANGED INDIVIDUAL. WEIZMAN SAID THE REPORT, ALTHOUGH FALSE, HAD RESULTED IN A COMBINED POLICE-MILITARY ACTION WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS A USEFUL AND GOOD EXERCISE. HE OBSERVED THAT THE QUICK ISRAELI REACTION HAD BEEN AN INDICATION OF THE TENSE ATMOSPHERE EXISTING IN THE PUBLIC MIND CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY OF ADDITIONAL TERRORISM.

2. WITHOUT PROMPTING, WEIZMAN MUSED ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF AN ATTACK SIMILAR TO THAT OF MARCH 11 AGAIN TOOK PLACE. HE POINTED OUT THAT IF ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE INDICATED THE ATTACK HAD COME FROM THE VICINITY OF BEIRUT, THE IDF COULD NOT REACT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON (WE READ AS REFERRING TO TYRE) BECAUSE OF THE PRESENCE OF UNIFIL. HE SAID, "WE WILL REACT IF WE GET INFORMATION- IF IT (A TERRORIST ATTACK) COMES FROM A BASE NEAR BEIRUT WE CAN'T GO TO BINT JUBAYL." LEFT UNSAID WAS
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WHERE THE IDF WOULD GO AND WHAT TYPE OF ACTION THEY WOULD TAKE.

3. COMMENT: WEIZMAN KNOWS FULL WELL--AND HAS SAID SO--THAT THE IDF CANNOT ANNIHILATE TERRORISM BY ATTACKS ON ISOLATED PLO BASES IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR LOCATION. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS AN IRON LAW IN THIS

SOCIETY THAT A TERRORIST ATTACK WHICH RESULTS IN THE LOSS OF LIVES WILL AUTOMATICALLY TRIGGER ISRAELI RETALIATION. WEIZMAN DID NOT SPECULATE AS TO WHAT FORM RETALIATION MIGHT TAKE SHOULD ANOTHER TERRORIST ATTACK OCCUR IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HE IS NOW ALL TOO WELL AWARE OF THE ADVERSE PUBLICITY AND POLITICAL IMPACT THAT WOULD RESULT FROM BOMBING, FOR EXAMPLE. BUT THIS HAS THE ATTRACTION FOR THE ISRAELIS OF BEING THE QUICKEST FORM OF RETALIATION, AND THE LEAST LIKELY TO RESULT IN IDF CASUALTIES.

4. IN THE EVENT OF ANOTHER ATTACK HE WILL ALSO BE FACED WITH THE PROBLEM AS TO THE ORIGIN OR LAUNCH POINT FROM WHICH THE TERRORISTS DEPART. THE ISRAELIS ARE AWARE OF PLO BASES IN LEBANON AND IN CYPRUS WHICH MIGHT BE USED FOR TERRORIST RAIDS. IT IS DIFFICULT AT THIS POINT TO ASSESS IF INDEED THE GOI WOULD TAKE THE HARD DECISION TO STRIKE AGAINST A CYPRUS BASE IF THEY WERE CONFIDENT THE ATTACK HAD BEEN LAUNCHED FROM THERE. WE SHOULD BEAR IN MIND, HOWEVER, THAT THE MILITARY WILL SOON BE LED BY GENERAL EITAN, A MAN WHOSE REPUTATION TO A GREAT EXTENT HAS BEEN BUILT ON PLANNING AND EXECUTING RAIDS AGAINST TERRORIST BASES OUTSIDE OF ISRAEL. HE CAN BE EXPECTED TO URGE RETALIATION IN SOME FORM AGAINST PLO BASES REGARDLESS OF THEIR GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION.

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5. FRANKLY, I DO NOT BELIEVE THERE IS MUCH MOE WE CAN DO AT THIS POINT TO URGE RESTRAINT ON WEIZMAN. HOW SUCCESSFUL OUR PROTESTATIONS WOULD BE TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT IN THE EVENT OF ANOTHER TERRORIST ATTACK WILL ONLY BE KNOWN IN THE EVENT. OBVIOUSLY WE CAN, SHOULD AND WILL CONTINUE TO REMIND WEIZMAN AND OTHERS OF THE TERRIBLE IMPLICATIONS THIS DILEMMA POSES. BUT WE SHOULD NOT BE UNDER ANY ILLUSIONS: IF MORE ISRAELI LIVES ARE LOST A PENALTY WILL NOT HAVE TO BE PAID SOMEWHERE, SOMEHOW, BY SOMEONE(S).

6. DEPARTMENT TO DISTRIBUTE AS DEEMED APPROPRIATE.
LEWIS

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